

VZCZCXRO9688
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW
DE RUEHBUL #0582/01 0740515
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 150515Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7741
RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
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INFO RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
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RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000582

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL, INL/AP, SCA, AF

REF: KABUL 384

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN/COUNTERNARCOTICS: 2009 DRUG ARREST AND SEIZURE
STATISTICS; FEBRUARY 20 to MARCH 10

11. (U) Summary. This cable is the second in a monthly series recording significant counternarcotics activity in Afghanistan. Highlights include:

- The Afghan National Police Poppy Eradication Force (PEF) and Afghan National Army Counter Narcotics Infantry Kandak (CNIK) eradicated about 27 hectares of poppy in three days of operations inside the Food Zone in Nad-e Ali district. PEF/CNIK received sporadic harassing fire from insurgents on all three days, with one CNIK soldier killed by RPG fire on March 3. ISAF responded to enemy attacks twice during the week with artillery and once with air-to-surface missiles. PEF/CNIK conducted eradication outside the Food Zone March 7-10.

- Governor Led Eradication efforts (GLE) in Helmand province have eradicated 811 hectares while also facing stiff opposition from insurgent forces. Total verified eradication (PEF and GLE) as of March 10 stands at nearly 3,000 ha.

- The Afghan government arrested 3 low and mid-level narcotics traffickers, seized 902 kg of opium and destroyed 4 heroin labs.

- For the time frame 19 Jan-20 Feb, the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) started 30 case investigations involving 37 suspects while 65 cases are in the prosecution stage. The Primary court convicted 26 people on drug trafficking offences and acquitted 8. The Appeal Court convicted 51 people and acquitted 8.

End Summary.

ERADICATION AND RAIDS

12. (SBU) Helmand Operation: Repeated refusals to leave base camp by the ANA's Counter Narcotics Infantry Kandak (CNIK) crippled Food Zone operations, which are now suspended in favor of eradication in more secure areas. At the PAG on March 12 with Defense Minister Wardak present, DCM Dell stressed the importance of supporting Helmand Governor Mangal and seconded the UK's request that Wardak order the CNIK to enter districts such as Nad Ali. Dell praised Mangal's careful planning, noting Mangal deserved the support of all elements of his own government. All parts of the government must work together to succeed in delivering governance at the local level, Dell said.

¶3. (SBU) Citing security concerns, the CNIK commander refused to take part in the first day of Food Zone operations, planned for February 22. After ANA Chief of Staff General Bismullah Khan and DMOI Daud traveled to Helmand on February 23 to stiffen CNIK's resolve, PEF/CNIK conducted eradication in the Food Zone on February 24, February 28, March 2, and March 3. Harassing fire from insurgents occurred on three of four days, killing one CNIK soldier on March 3. ISAF supported CNIK with artillery and missiles on February 24 and March 3. Due to difficulty of movement, harassment by insurgents, and interspersing of poppy with other crops in small fields, PEF/CNIK averaged less than 10 hectares per day inside the Food Zone.

¶4. (SBU) On March 4, the CNIK commander again declined to take the field, this time citing potential civilian casualties. On March 6, Governor Mangal and the ANA 205th Corps Chief of Staff visited PEF/CNIK. Mangal accepted that PEF/CNIK should eradicate outside the Food Zone for the time being, but stated his desire for PEF/CNIK to return to the Food Zone as soon as possible. On March 7, PEF/CNIK began eradication operations outside the Food Zone in the area North-West of Babaji. As of March 10, PEF/CNIK had eradicated more than 200 ha in this area (with no enemy contact).

¶5. (SBU) In addition to the PEF operations, Governor Led Eradication efforts (GLE) in Helmand province have eradicated 811 hectares inside the Food Zone since mid-February, while also facing stiff opposition from insurgent forces. Total verified eradication in Helmand (PEF and GLE) as of March 10 stands at nearly 2,929 ha.

DRUG ARREST AND SEIZURE STATISTICS

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¶6. (SBU) The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Kabul provided the following information on counternarcotics (CN) arrests and seizures for February 20 - March 10. The statistics are broken down by law enforcement organization.

¶7. (SBU) Kabul Country Office (DEA): Arrests: 3 (total for 2009: 7); Opium seized: 902 kg (total for 2009: 1505 kg); Precursor chemicals (liquid): 320 liters (total for 2009: 320 liters).

¶8. (SBU) Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA): Arrests: 37 (total for 2009: 38); Heroin seized: 240 kg (total for 2009: 603 kg); Opium seized: 549 kg (total for 2009: 4053 kg); Morphine seized: 1 kg (total for 2009: 35 kg); Hashish seized: 11,796 kg (total for 2009: 12,010 kg); Precursor chemicals (solid): 3,765 kg (total for 2009: 3765 kg); Precursor chemicals (liquid): 259 liters (total for 2009: 719 liters).

¶9. (SBU) Total seizures for 2009: Opium: 9,418 kg; Heroin: 603 kg; Morphine: 35 kg; Hashish: 11,796 kg; Precursor Chemicals (solid): 3,765 kg; Precursor Chemicals (liquid): 1039 liters.

SIGNIFICANT CN CASES

¶10. (SBU) Mohammed Gul. Mohammed Gul's conviction for heroin trafficking was upheld in Appeals Court of the Counter Narcotics Tribunal in Kabul on February 28, 2009. Gul was a highway police officer in Kabul who assisted a large network of heroin dealers throughout the city. He was arrested along with eight associates in August 2008 with approximately 26 kgs of heroin. The arrests were the result of a complex undercover operation by SIU. The total amount of heroin seized was about 26 kg. All nine defendants were convicted in Primary Court and sentenced to 16 years imprisonment.

¶11. (SBU) Haji Abdullah Khostel. Haji Khostel was indicted in Kabul with a trial date set for late March. He is suspected of masterminding one of the largest heroin production and trafficking operations in Afghanistan as well as collusion with the Taliban, who provided security for his activities. On February 5, 2009 the ASNF conducted several raids in Farah province (eastern Afghanistan) targeting Khostel's associates, relatives and drug processing facilities. Khostel was subsequently arrested at Herat airport to

prevent his escape from Afghanistan. He is suspected to be involved in the trafficking of more than 1700 kgs of heroin, 4100 kgs of opium and 2700 liters of precursors.

¶12. (SBU) Muhammaeb Sayeed Silab, a former senior CNPA officer in Nimruz Province, was arrested on January 20 for his connection with the Haji Abdullah Khostel trafficking network that facilitated their activities both within Afghanistan and across the Afghan-Iranian border. Saleb has attempted to obtain a reduced sentence by cooperating with CJTF prosecutors in accordance with Article 41 of the Counter Narcotics Law. Information he provided has led to the arrest and disruption of the Khostel network. Silab's trial is expected to start in April.

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